

10 p.m.



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MR. YEEUD

PRIME MINISTER

MEDIA RELEASE

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STATE DINNER - MANILA

I am greatly honoured to be your guest - so soon after my arrival in your country. It is also my privilege, I understand, to be the first Head of Government to be entertained in this splendidly renovated and quite magnificent banquet room - a room which is a tribute to Madam Marcos' renowned artistic talents and great interest in Philippine culture and history.

Mr President, the warm and gracious hospitality given to visitors to the Philippines is world renowned - and this evening's dinner exemplifies that hospitality.

Since I became Prime Minister of Australia I have travelled through Manila twice and had discussions with you and your distinguished Foreign Minister, General Romulo. But this is the first occasion on which I have been able to spend several days in your capital.

I recall very clearly our discussions in Kuala Lumpur - the last occasion on which we met - and I look forward to following up the valuable exchange of views we had on that occasion.

Our countries are old friends, sharing many common interests - and tonight I wish to re-emphasise and re-affirm the friendship between our peoples. For more than three decades our countries have enjoyed close relations. Australia and the Philippines were two of the original three signatories of the United Nations Charter from this region. We have been comrades in arms in two wars. You, yourself - Mr President - will always be remembered for the part you played in the defence of your country during the Pacific War. As will those countrymen who fought with you.

After the heroic defence of Bataan, and Corregidor, President Qezon and General Macarthur were evacuated, initially to Australia, to be followed by our good friend General Romulo. And it was in Australia that the campaign to liberate the Philippines was planned.

The ties formed in a time of common peril, are now part of the fabric of the history of our two countries.

Today the Philippines, with population of 44 million - its level of education and technology - its support of the free enterprise system - its favourable attitude towards foreign investment - its economic potential and prospects as a growing market - is an important country for Australia.

The Philippines' prominent role in ASEAN enhances this importance. Your country's economy like the economies of the other countries of ASEAN, has undergone rapid growth over recent years. At the same time, in the space of some four years, you have undertaken a major attack on inflation - and created new jobs for an expanding labour force.

These achievements are all the more remarkable in the face of the generally depressed state of the world economy. This, I think tells us something about the role your country and the other countries of the South East Asian Region can be expected to play - in the development of the international economy.

In this sense it is particularly appropriate, Mr President, that your Government is hosting the fifth United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.

Forums like UNCTAD are crucial in today's world, when the developing and developed countries must maintain the closest dialogue. In their endeavours to meet the challenges of the global economy UNCTAD has shown that it can be an effective force for improving the existing international economic system by bridging the differences between developed and developing nations - but much more needs to be done.

There is a need at UNCTAD to pay attention to the problems of inflation - inflation which reduces the growth of domestic markets, hinders the expansion of world trade - and increases pressure for protectionism. If greater progress is to be made in improving access to markets, if new market growth is to be generated and standards to be raised, inflation must be rigorously combatted.

The goals of economic development and the raising of living standards will best be achieved in a peaceful and stable world. Unfortunately, it cannot be said that we live in such a world today. In the Middle East, and Africa - there are serious tensions which are of concern to us both. Fighting in Kampuchea continues and there is little sign of progress in the talks between China and Vietnam. Indeed, Indo-China has become a battle ground for a conflict between Communist States - a conflict which has the potential to draw in the major powers - and thereby threaten the stability of the region.

In such a situation we need to exercise our influence as a force for moderation and for the peaceful resolution of differences. We all have a role to play in this. It is not enough to leave it to the great powers or to the weight of numbers. It does not matter whether nations are aligned or non-aligned. What is important is that nations with moderate views put them forward forcefully and with vigour, and find reasonable solutions to international problems.

Australia is very conscious of the importance of ASEAN as a force for moderation in the Region. ASEAN has emerged as a most cohesive and resilient grouping of countries in recent South East Asian history. We fully share and support the fundamental aims of ASEAN -- the maintenance of peace and stability in South East Asia, freedom from Great Power rivalry -- the promotion of friendly relations with other countries -- and the raising of the living standards of the peoples of the Region.

Let me emphasise, Mr President, that Australia's interest and involvement in South East Asia is strong and growing, and that it is a central and enduring policy objective of the Australian Government to strengthen contacts and relationships with ASEAN in all fields of common interest. The acronym ASEAN has a second meaning for us -- its stands not only for the Association of South East Asian Nations -- but also for Australia's South East Asian Neighbours.

It is also fundamental Australian policy to consolidate, strengthen and develop in the years ahead our already close, cordial and co-operative relationship with the Philippines.

I believe that the relationship between our countries has developed very well since we last met in Kuala Lumpur. Our political commitment to strengthen the relations between our nations has been matched by concrete actions. We have increased our political exchanges through inaugural officials's talks and the strengthening of our Embassies.

Trade between us is expanding rapidly with your exports to Australia, growing at more than 45% per annum. We have initialled a double taxation agreement and signed an important nuclear safeguards' agreement, which will open the way for the sale of Australian uranium to the Philippines.

Australia fully appreciates the problems developing countries face with their energy programmes and you can look to Australia as a reliable supplier of uranium and coal in the future.

In addition to the initiatives I have mentioned, it is worth noting that Australia's two largest development assistance projects anywhere in the world are both in the Philippines.

Both our countries are concerned that international recognition should be given to measures promoting the development and well-being of all countries and people.

We share a common concern for the peace, security and stability of the South East Asian Region to which we both belong. We share a common concern for economic and social progress and justice in this region. We share a common support for the forces of co-operation, moderation and toleration in the conduct of our international and regional relations.

Our common concerns and purposes will become increasingly important in the years to come. Thank you for your invitation tonight, which gives us the opportunity to discuss the issues which concern us both - and a chance to build our approach to the problems and the very great opportunities which lie ahead.

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